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THE MONTHLY GULL BULLETIN

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FARALLON ISLAND TRIP YIELDS UNEXPECTED SPECIES

On an August field trip of the Golden Gate Audubon Society a number of persons expressed a desire to study pelagic birds such as shearwaters, jaegers, albatrosses, etc., all of which are seen only rarely and with difficulty from shore. Hence, on October 3, 1954, 18 members sailed at 6:10 a.m. from Berkeley Yacht Harbor aboard the 50-foot "Privateer" chartered for the purpose, with the Southeast Farallon Island 25 miles off the Golden Gate as our destintion. While we expected to see many shearwaters and alcids, and hoped to find an albatross, we were not prepared for some of the treats we later encountered, not all of them avian.

The sea was very calm, with a glassy surface on the slight swells in the morning — a condition rare in this area. This made for a most pleasurable cruise and greatly facilitated our observation with binoculars. The sky was clear, the temperature moderate, and there was only a light breeze later in the day.

About five minutes out of the Berkeley harbor we saw the first Common Murre, unusually far within the bay. Near and through the Golden Gate there were hundreds of Murres, and soon we boat passengers were saying, "It's only some more Murres". Inshore of the lightship anchored some 8½ miles offshore, beyond the main ship channel, no birds of more truly pelagic habits were seen, although cormorants, gulls, and murres were numerous. Then, at points up to 14 miles offshore, a few Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters and one Black-vented Shearwater were seen; and at 11 miles offshore one of the rare Gray-backed Shearwaters *(Puffinus bulleri)* flew close to us, showing its characteristic dark brown, inverted W across the upper surface of the spread wings (see THE GULL, *32,* 37-38 (1950)).

Before reaching the island we had superb views, off and on for over a half hour, of groups of Dall's Porpoises, a small type with sharply contrasting black and white coloration. They swam speedily toward the boat, then usually veering to play alongside or even under the bow for several minutes, surfacing momentarily at frequent intervals. In sharp contrast to the actions of these spirited 6-foot cetaceans were the slow rollings of their much larger relatives, the two Humpback Whales, which we watched in awe a few minutes later. We could even hear their loudy hissing breathing as we said "Thar' she blows!" Two more whales, probably of the same kind, were seen west of

the island. (For identifying features of these mammals, see Burt and Grossenheider's "Field Guide to the Mammals", a Peterson Field Guide published by Houghton-Mifflin).

After circling the Southeast Farallon Island, it was found that we had made such good mileage, what with the calm sea, that we could go farther. Accordingly, after a 40-minute run past the tiny Middle Farallon we were close by the North Farallon Islands — a new area to all aboard. Thousands of Phalaropes, mostly Reds, but with up to 10% Northerns mixed in, were foraging on the ocean close to the island. With no nesting in progress at this season, these and several alcids were the chief features of attraction at the islands — except for the fish caught by some of our number.

On the return trip, 11 additional Gray-backed Shearwaters were seen, and also a Tufted Puffin and a number of Jaegers, including some definitely Pomarine and a probable Parasitic. To climax it all, when we were about 20 miles offshore and watching the Shearwaters, a Skua appeared in the air almost above the boat. Because of the scarcity of specimen-backed records and the need for specimens of these species in museums in this country, the Skua and one of the Gray-backed Shearwaters were collected. Although no Albatrosses were found on this trip, the unexpected sight of the Skua, a much rarer species off the California coast, seemed to be more than an adequate substitute for none of the persons aboard had ever seen the species before.

All told, the log of birds and other animals seen, which I kept with fair diligence during all of the trip except for about a half-hour in the afternoon, produced the following totals for the species recorded on the entire trip of 11½ hours: BIRDS: Loon, sp.?, 1; Sooty Shearwater, 240; Pink-footed Shearwater, 51; Black-vented Shearwater, 2; Gray-backed Shearwater, 12; unidentified Shearwaters, 235; Brown Pelican, 232 (including 200 est. on and near S. E. Farallon); Double-crested Cormorant, 16; Brandt Cormorant, thousands; Pelagic Cormorant, hundreds; unidentified Cormorants, many; Pintail, flock of 15 flying SE from near island; Black Turnstone, 15; small unidentified shorebirds, 120; Red Phalarope, 12,000 or more; Northern Phalarope, 1000 est.; Skua, 1; Pomarine Jaeger, 3; Parasitic (?) Jaeger, 1; unidentified Jaegers, 11; Glaucous-winged Gull, 7; Western Gull, thousands; Herring Gull, 20+; Calif. Gull, many; Ring-billed Gull, 1; Heermann Gull, 20+; Forster Tern, 3; Common Murre, 700 est.; Pigeon Guillemot, 5; Cassin Auklet, 4 or 5; Rhinoceros Auklet, 3; Tufted Puffin, 1; Belted Kingfisher, 1 (in Berkeley harbor). MAMMALS: Harbor Seal, 2 (in bay); Steller Sea-lion, hundreds (at island); Dall Porpoise, 21; unidentified porpoise, 3; Humpback Whale, 2, and 2 ?. Fish: Ling-cod, Cabezone, "Rock-cod" and Yellowtail Rockfish (all caught near islands); Shark, sp.?, 1; INVERTEBRATES: two species of large jellyfish (one tan, one purplish); smaller jellyfish; comb-jellies.

— Howard L. Cogswell

NEW MEMBERS. We welcome the following: from San Francisco, Miss Laura M. Bittman, Miss Jane Harding, Mrs. Mary H. Hutchinson, W. B. Winston; from Oakland, Mrs. H. J. Erickson, Mrs. W. H. Sellander; from Berkeley, Charles Coit, Miss Maria T. Davis, Miss Phyllis Lindley, Mrs. Otis Marston, Miss Ruth H. Newborgh, Mrs. Derwent A. Suthers, Mrs. Sylvia Thomssen, Miss Bertha S. Underhill; from Yountville, Bruce K. Harris.

SCREEN TOUR LECTURE. Friday, January 7, Charles Mohr, "Outdoor Almanac", Berkeley High School Little Theatre, 27, 8 p.m.

DECEMBER TRIP TO CONN LAKE

On December 12 at Conn Lake, the 38 members and guests (in 19 cars) were confronted with cloudy skies and chilly weather. The Whistling Swans and Wood Ducks were conspicuous by their absence. The day was proclaimed a success when 2 Rufous-crowned Sparrows were seen in and near some cattails on the north shore of the lake. We were very sorry to hear that the scheduled leader, Leland Stallcup, was ill and unable to attend. The following 77 species were seen or identified by their call-notes or songs: Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Western Grebe, Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, American Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, Canada Goose (including some of the Cackling sub-species), Mallard, Gadwall, Baldpate, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Shoveller, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Canvas-back, Lesser Scaup, American Golden-eye, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck, Hooded Merganser, American Merganser, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Marsh Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, Calif. Quail, Ring-necked Pheasant, Coot, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Calif. Gull, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-shafted Flicker, Acorn Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied (Red-breasted) Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Nuttall Woodpecker, Black Phoebe, Say Phoebe, Scrub Jay, Crow, Plain Titmouse, Bush-tit, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wren-tit, Bewick Wren, Robin, Varied Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Western Bluebird, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Water Pipit, Cedar Waxwing, Loggerhead Shrike, Audubon Warbler, House Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Brewer Blackbird, Purple Finch, House Finch, Green-backed Goldfinch, Spotted Towhee, Brown Towhee, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Oregon Junco, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow.

— CARLYLE SATHER, *Leader and Historian.*

OBSERVATIONS. TROPICAL KINGBIRD, 1 on Nov. 13 at RCA Ranch, near Point Reyes; STARLING, 450 near Point Reyes on Nov. 13 (Russell H. Pray, Howard Cogswell, Herbert Wong).

Harry C. Adamson won third place among 93 entrants submitting a design for the U. S. Department of the Interior's 1955-56 migratory bird hunting stamp.

SUNSET for Dec. 1954 has an article "Which Gull is That?" which discusses 7 of the common gulls of the Pacific coast; the Bonaparte is rated in rarity with the Glaucous and Laughing and the Western is classed as one of the most difficult to identify!

TIME for Nov. 8, under "Science" has an article "The Battle of Midway" about the nesting of the goony birds (black-footed albatross) which nest on the runways there. The Dec. 13 number tells about the new telephone service in Boston where one dials Kenmore 6-4050 and receives a bulletin on the latest news of occurrences of birds, such as brown-capped chickadees and white-winged crossbills in the Arnold Arboretum. The same number tells how the natives of France's Tuamotu Archipeligo use frigate birds to carry messages from island to island; one took off in the wrong direction and turned up with the letter 1000 miles away.

THE CONDOR for Sept.-Oct. 1954 includes "A Third Record of the Black-throated Blue Warbler", by Eric Kinsey of Manor, and "Additions to the Avifaunal Record of Point Lobos" by Ken Legg, who records 25 new species including the Man-o'-war Bird.

ANNUAL MEETING AND DINNER

The 38th annual meeting of the Golden Gate Audubon Society will be preceded by a dinner at Zerikotes' Lake Merritt Dining Room, 1520 Oak Street, Oakland, at 6 p.m. on January 13. A special chicken dinner at $2.25 will be served. Reservations are limited and must be made in advance, preferably by mail, on or before Monday, January 10, with Miss Alice B. Leet, 1050 Spruce St., Berkeley 7. To avoid disappointment make your reservation early. This will be a very special, enjoyable Audubon party, an outstanding event. Don't miss it! The annual meeting will be held at Zerikotes' at 8 o'clock; those not attending the dinner may come at this time. Following reports and election of officers and directors, Mrs. Junea W. Kelly will speak on "The 11th International Ornithological Congress in Switzerland".

MRS. T. ERIC REYNOLDS, *Chairman, Social Committee*
MRS. BUDD J. SMITH, *Chairman, Program Committee.*

JANUARY TRIP TO TOMALES BAY

On Sunday, January 16, to Tomales Bay and vicinity, probably to Tomales Point if the weather permits. From San Francisco take 7:35 bus to Pt. Reyes Station; meet at the hotel at 9:15 a.m. On this trip in the past we have usually seen Harlequin Ducks, Black Oyster-catchers, Black Brant, White Pelican and Peregrine Falcons, sometimes also Fulmars, American Scoters, Old-squaws and Red-necked Grebes. Leader Howard L. Cogswell. Bring lunch, warm drink, warm clothing, binoculars, telescopes, and interested friends.

JANUARY TRIP TO LAKE MERRITT

On Saturday, January 29, to Lake Merritt in Oakland. This is a good place to see many species of water birds at close range in this long-time sanctuary, and also visit the Rotary Natural Science Center nearby. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the bird feeding station. From San Francisco take "B" train and get off at Perkins St. and Grand Ave. Leader Paul Covel, Oakland Park Naturalist. Mr. and Mrs. Arthur H. Myer have invited the group to meet at their home at 25 El Camino Real, Berkeley, for coffee at 1 p.m. Bring lunch.

— FRANK A. SCOTT, *Chairman, Field Trips Committee.*

Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc.

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Monthly meetings second Thursday, 7:30 p. m. Joint Membership, Local and National $5.00 per year, includes Audubon Magazine. Local Membership only, $1.50 per year.

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